

Fall 2015 Furbearer Quotas

Submitted by: John Olson, DNR Furbearer Specialist

Graphs by: Robert Rolley, DNR Wildlife Research Scientist

Recently, 2015 Furbearer Advisory Committee quota recommendations were approved by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Policy Team, as described below.

Bobcat

The Furbearer Advisory Committee recommended a Northern Zone quota of 300 (an increase over the 240 quota recommended the past two seasons) and a Southern Zone quota of 100 (an increase of 50 from the initial year this portion of the state was opened for regulated take in this century, 2014).

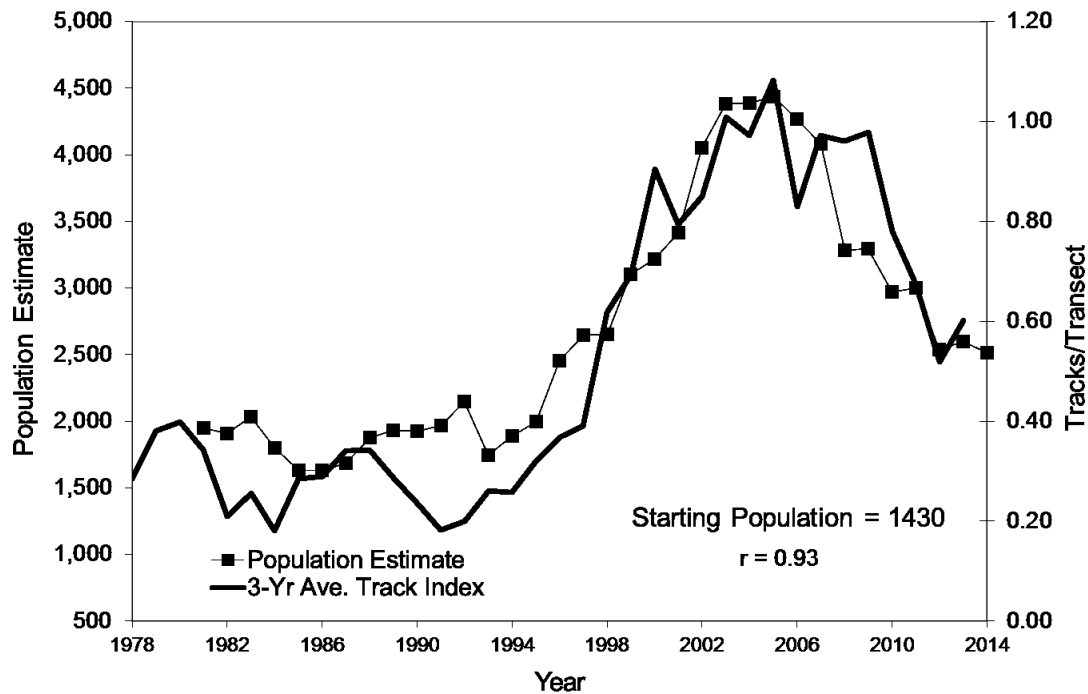
The final quota, minus tribal declarations, will be split equally between two time periods (Oct. 17 to Dec. 25 and Dec. 25 to Jan. 31). The Northern Zone quota for each time period is 119, with a Southern Zone quota of 48 for each respective time period. Due to differences in success rate, the number of permits for each zone and time period will differ.

In the Northern Zone, where the department and harvesters have years of experience and history, we use the highest success rate in the prior three years for permit issuance. In 2015, for Time Period 1 this would be 50%, and Time Period 2 would be 74%. Primary reasons for a higher success rate in the latter time period most likely relates to the presence of tracking snow and devoted, late-season hound hunting. With a quota of 119 bobcats for each time period, there would be approximately 240 permits issued for the Northern Zone Time Period 1, and 160 permits issued for the Northern Zone, Time Period 2.

In the Southern Zone, where we have one year of recent harvest experience, the success rate was 42% for Time Period 1 and 58% for Time Period 2. With a quota of 48 bobcats for each time period, there would be 115 permits issued for the Southern Time Period 1 and 80 permits issued for the Southern Zone Time Period 2.

This is the fourth year in a row of increased quota recommendations, and with the addition of a new Southern Zone, harvest recommendations this year are equal to the highest recommendation ever submitted for bobcats in Wisconsin. With expanded opportunity statewide and extended opportunities into January, we expect an increase in harvest opportunity and experience with this wild cat in Wisconsin.

As in past years, harvest needs to be reported within 24 hours by calling 1 (800) 994-6673, and pelts must be registered (carcass included) with your local conservation officers within five days of the month of harvest. Carcasses are used to collect age information from all bobcats, and reproductive status for females.



Pre-hunt bobcat population estimates for northern Wisconsin, and 3-year mean numbers of bobcat tracks observed per transect in winter track surveys, 1978–2014

Fisher

Fisher management continues to present unique challenges, with somewhat long-term declines in northern portions of Fisher Zones A – D and a significant population increase in southern portions of these zones, as well as Zones E & F in southern Wisconsin.

Approved harvest quotas are as follows:

Zone A – 175 (increase from 150 in 2014)

- After tribal declarations are honored, the highest success rate in the last three years (38%), 230 permits will be available this year.

Zone B - 75 (no change from 2014)

- After tribal declarations are honored, and with a success rate of 22%, 170 permits will be available this year.

Zone C - 60 (no change from 2014)

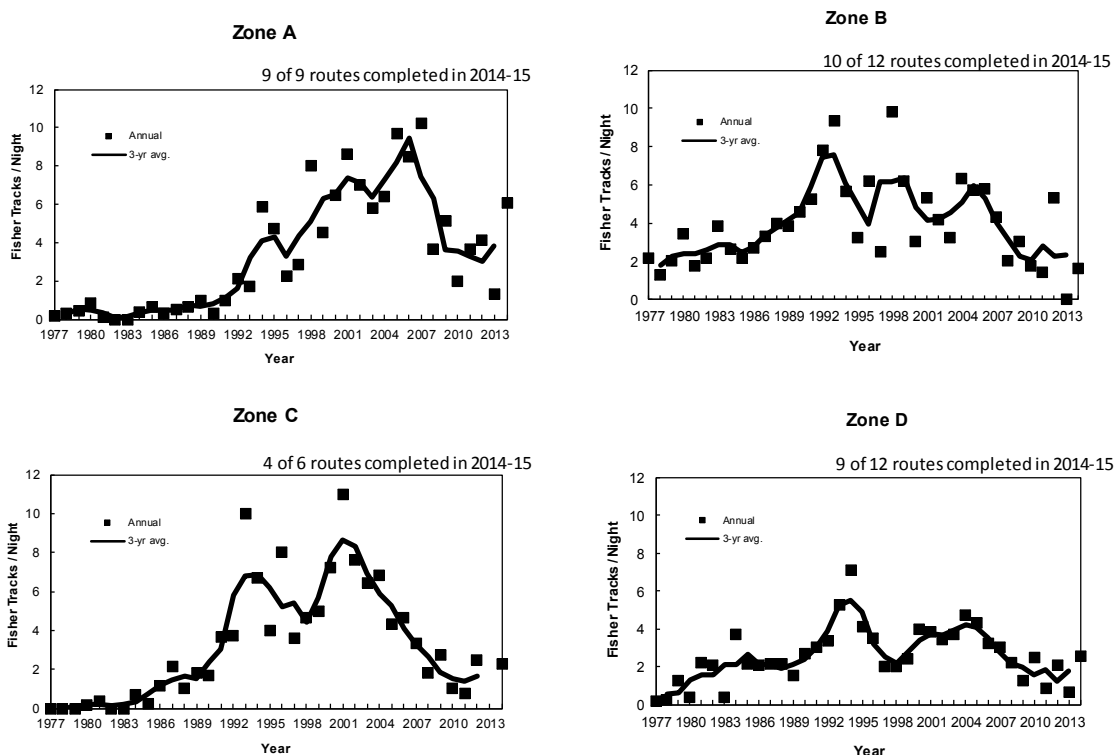
- With no tribal declarations and a success rate of 17%, 345 permits will be available this year.

Zone D - 75 (no change from 2014)

- With no tribal declarations and a success rate of 20%, 375 permits will be available this year.

These graphs track the results of winter track surveys over these four zones the past several years.

Trends in Northern Forest Fisher Track Counts by Management Zone



The southern half of Wisconsin is comprised of two fisher management zones. Without consistent snow for annual track surveys we carefully watch success rates and combine this with local knowledge and observations in developing quotas.

Zone E – 250 (increase from 220 in 2014)

- This central forest zone was first established and opened for regulated trapping in 2000. The 2000 quota was 20, with 21 permits issued. In 2015, Zone E will see over a twelve-fold increase in quota and a 33-fold increase in permits. With no tribal declarations and a success rate of 36% (highest in the last eight years), 690 permits will be available this year.

Zone F – 350 (increase from 260 in 2014)

- Zone F is the largest fisher zone in the state, and includes areas we once anticipated would not make for reasonably good fisher habitat, only to see fishers thrive. Zone F first opened for fisher harvest in 2004 with a quota of 40. In 2014, Zone F accounted for over 40% of the statewide

harvest. With no tribal declarations and a success rate of 22%, 1,540 permits will be available this year.

Fisher harvest follows the same criteria as bobcat, with 24-hour harvest reporting. Fisher skulls from all zones will be required at the time of registration.

Otter

Over the past two decades, the department has worked to improve survey methods and continue aerial surveys through direct financial assistance from the Wisconsin Trappers Association. When harvest success rates are compared to aerial surveys there is no correlation. When aerial surveys are compared to beaver trapper opinions there is no correlation. And, when beaver trapper opinions are compared to harvest success rates, there is no correlation.

With a wide array of information that doesn't fit squarely within definable trends, the Furbearer Committee has closely evaluated trapper and field personnel input. For 2015–16, the statewide otter quota has been set at 1,700. Total quota is divided amongst three zones with 40% allotted to the North Zone, 30% to the Central Zone, and 30% to the South Zone. Success rates are somewhat similar in the North (32%) and Central (38%) zones, with the South Zone at 25%.

Approved harvest quotas are as follows:

North Zone - 605 (increase from 450 in 2014)

- With tribal declarations, 1,880 permits will be available this year.

Central Zone - 510 (increase from 390 in 2014)

- With no tribal declarations, 1,340 permits will be available this year.

South Zone – 510 (increase from 390 in 2014)

- With no tribal declarations, 2,040 permits will be available this year.

Otter harvest must be reported within 24 hours of take. In 2015–16, otter carcasses are required at time of registration statewide.